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N.J. senators seek a ban on powerful assault pistol

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The Five-SeveN pistol is small enough to fit into your pocket but packs a big punch - its bullets can penetrate a bulletproof vest. One of the weapons was recently pulled off the streets of Camden County, and New Jersey and New York lawmakers want them out of the hands of the public for good.

New Jersey Democratic Sens. Jon Corzine and Frank R. Lautenberg, Sen. Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., and Rep. Eliot Engel, D-N.Y., introduced a bill Thursday that would make it illegal for anyone except a police officer or military official to possess the assault pistol.

In November, the Homeland Security Department issued an "Officer Safety Alert" regarding the pistol with the headline "body armor defeating handgun." The alert said that the Trumbull, Conn., police department had seized such a pistol and noted that its bullets were "advertised as being able to penetrate 48 layers of Kevlar at 50 meters."

The lawmakers said there is no legitimate reason for members of the public to own the gun.

"This is not a Second Amendment issue," Corzine said during a Washington news conference. "Who needs one of these? The only reason is for violence."

The Protect Law Enforcement Armor Act would ban the sale, purchase and use of the handgun and its ammunition by anyone other than a police officer or military official. The bill would also prohibit the gun and ammunition from being made in the United States.

Camden County Prosecutor Vincent Sarubbi urged lawmakers to support the bill, calling it a test case.

A Five-SeveN gun was found on an alleged drug dealer in December during a drug investigation in Camden County, Sarubbi said. The gun had been purchased illegally in Philadelphia, he said.

Michael Barnes, president of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, challenged the National Rifle Association to defend the pistol, even daring NRA chief executive Wayne LaPierre to don a bulletproof vest to have the pistol tested.

The NRA did not immediately return a call for comment.

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